DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 507 CS 216 849

TITLE	NAEP 1998 Writing Report Card Highlights.
INSTITUTION	National Assessment of Educational Progress, Princeton, NJ.; Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ.
SPONS AGENCY	National Center for Education Statistics (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	NCES-1999-464
PUB DATE	1999-09-00
NOTE	18p.; Printed originally in 8.5 inch by 17 inch "tabloid" format. This copy specially obtained in 8.5 inch by 11 inch format. For the entire report covering the nation and the states, see CS 216 850. For the 40 separate reports for 36 states, the District of Columbia, Department of Defense Dependent Domestic Schools, Department of Defense Dependent Overseas Schools, and the Virgin Islands, see CS 216 851-390.
AVAILABLE FROM	ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398. Tel: 877-433-7827 (Toll Free); Web site: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html>. For full text: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/main1998/1999464.pdf>.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Comparative Analysis; Grade 12; Grade 4; Grade 8; *National Competency Tests; *Standardized Tests; *Student Evaluation; Student Writing Models; Test Results; *Writing Achievement; Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS	National Assessment of Educational Progress; State Writing Assessments

ABSTRACT

This paper presents highlights from the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) writing assessment, which was given to a national sample representative of all students at grades 4, 8, and 12 and to state samples representative of all students at grade 8 in the 40 participating states and jurisdictions. It begins with questions and answers about NAEP and then briefly describes 6 objectives and the purposes for the 3 types of writing assessed. It then presents 9 sample writing tasks and responses (3 at each grade level and at each achievement level--basic, proficient, and advanced). The paper then presents national results (including that 23% of fourth graders, 27% of eighth graders, and 22% of twelfth graders were at or above the proficient level) and data on writing performance by gender, race/ethnicity, and type of school. It next presents data on school and home factors related to writing achievement, and data regarding writing performance within states. It concludes with a six-item list of other publications and related materials. (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 433 507

NAEP 1998 Writing Report Card Highlights

NCES-1999-464

1999-09

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS 216 849

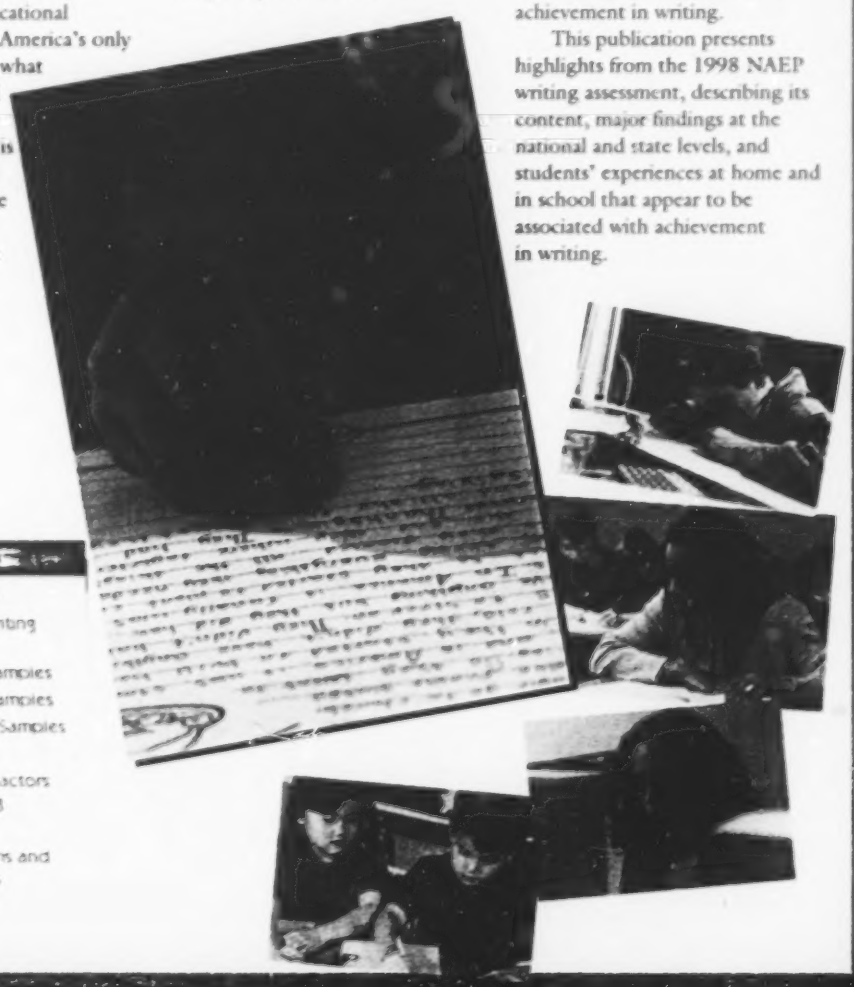
NAEP 1998 WRITING

Report Card Highlights

American students' achievement in writing at the end of the twentieth century is an important indicator of whether young adults in the twenty-first century will have the writing skills necessary to express themselves clearly. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), America's only ongoing survey of what students know and can do in various academic subjects, is one resource that can help inform the public about students' academic preparedness in writing.

The NAEP is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) with oversight by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB). In 1998, NAEP administered a writing assessment to a national sample representative of all students at grades 4, 8, and 12 and to state samples representative of all students at grade 8 in the states and other jurisdictions participating in the state-by-state assessment. The results of the assessment provide a snapshot of American students' achievement in writing.

This publication presents highlights from the 1998 NAEP writing assessment, describing its content, major findings at the national and state levels, and students' experiences at home and in school that appear to be associated with achievement in writing.



CONTENTS

2 NAEP in a Nutshell
2 The NAEP 1998 Writing Assessment
4 Grade 4 Writing Samples
6 Grade 8 Writing Samples
8 Grade 12 Writing Samples
10 National Results
12 School & Home Factors Related to Writing
14 State Results
16 Other Publications and Related Materials

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement

NCES 1999-464

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NAEP IN A NUTSHELL

Q: What is NAEP?

A: The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the nation's only ongoing assessment of what students know and can do in various subject areas. A project of the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department of Education, NAEP has assessed many academic subjects since its inception in 1969, including mathematics, science, reading, writing, world geography, U.S. history, civics, social studies, and the arts.

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), an independent agency that oversees NAEP, determines which subjects will be assessed and how they will be assessed. With the assistance of educators, parents, public leaders, and concerned citizens, NAGB develops the "framework" or guidelines, that determine how a subject area will be assessed. In addition, NAGB sets achievement levels, or student performance standards, for the three grades assessed—4, 8, and 12.

Q: How is student performance reported?

A: The results of student performance on the NAEP assessments are reported for various groups of students (for example, fourth-grade female students, twelfth-grade students attending private schools). The differences in performance between groups of students in 1998 that are discussed in this report are statistically significant.

Student performance is described in two ways: 1) scale scores, and 2) achievement levels.

Scale Scores

Student performance is reported as an average score based on the NAEP writing scale that ranges from 0 to 300. The average scale score reflects the overall writing performance of a particular group of students.

Achievement Levels

Student writing performance is also reported in terms of three achievement levels: ***Basic***, ***Proficient***, and ***Advanced***. Results based on achievement levels are expressed in terms of the percentage of students who attained each level. The three achievement levels are defined as follows:

Basic: This level denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade.

Proficient: This level represents solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.

Advanced: This level signifies superior performance.

Q: How should NAEP achievement levels be interpreted?

A: The achievement levels are performance standards adopted by NAGB as part of its statutory responsibilities. The levels are collective judgments of what students should know and be able to do for each grade tested. They are based on recommendations by broadly representative panels of classroom teachers, education specialists, and members of the general public.

As provided by law, the Commissioner of Education Statistics, upon review of a congressionally mandated evaluation of NAEP, has determined that the achievement levels are to be considered developmental and should be interpreted and used with caution. However, both the Commissioner and NAGB believe these performance standards are useful for understanding student achievement. They have been widely used by national and state officials, including the National Education Goals Panel, as a common yardstick of academic performance.

NOTE: For definitions of content and for the student groups in the discussions for this report, see the NAEP writing assessment participants.

The NAEP 1998 Writing Assessment

In 1998, NAEP assessed the writing achievement of students at grades 4, 8, and 12. A variety of tasks were used to engage students' interest and facilitate their best "first-draft" writing. The *Writing Framework and Specifications for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress* provided the guidelines for developing the writing assessment. This framework, developed by the National Assessment Governing Board, represents the expertise and experience of a wide array of specialists and concerned citizens, such as writing teachers, researchers, business leaders, scholars, and policymakers. The framework is based on six objectives that should guide students' development as writers.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Students should write for a variety of purposes: narrative, informative, and persuasive.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Students should write on a variety of tasks and for many different audiences.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Students should write from a variety of stimulus materials, and within various time constraints.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Students should generate, draft, revise, and edit ideas and forms of expression in their writing.

OBJECTIVE 5:

Students should display effective choices in the organization of their writing. They should include detail to illustrate and elaborate their ideas, and use appropriate conventions of written English.

OBJECTIVE 6:

Students should value writing as a communicative activity.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Purposes for Writing

The NAEP 1998 writing assessment measured students' performance on three types of writing: narrative, informative, and persuasive. These three broad types, or "purposes for writing," are commonly used in writing instruction, and thus were deemed most appropriate for NAEP's assessment of student achievement.

Narrative Writing

Narrative writing involves the production of stories or personal essays. It encourages writers to use their creativity and powers of observation to develop stories that can capture a reader's imagination.

The narrative tasks in the NAEP 1998 writing assessment asked students to write many kinds of stories (most fiction, some nonfiction). Some of the tasks asked students to write in response to photographs, cartoons, poems, or stories, which were provided with the assessment.

Informative Writing

Informative writing communicates information to the reader, whether it is to share knowledge or to convey messages, instructions, and ideas. It may involve reporting on events or experiences, or analyzing concepts and relationships.

The informative tasks in the 1998 writing assessment allowed students to write on specified subjects in a variety of formats, such as reports, reviews, and letters. Many of the tasks asked students to write in response to information provided with the assessment, such as newspaper articles, charts, photographs, and reported dialogues.

Persuasive Writing

Persuasive writing seeks to influence the reader to take some action or bring about change. It may contain factual information, such as reasons, examples, or comparisons; however, its main purpose is not to inform, but to persuade.

The persuasive tasks in the 1998 writing assessment asked students to write letters to friends, newspaper editors, or prospective employers, to refute arguments, or to take sides in a debate. Many of the tasks asked students to respond to letters, cartoons, or arguments, which were provided with the assessment.

Scoring the 1998 Writing Assessment

Students' responses were evaluated using scoring guides containing descriptions for six levels of writing performance, ranging from "Unsatisfactory" to "Excellent." Responses were evaluated according to three key elements of writing: development, organization, and grammar. Scoring guides were developed for each grade level and purpose for writing (e.g., grade 4 narrative guide, grade 12 persuasive guide).

During scoring, raters were encouraged to accept the many unique ways in which students respond to a task — and to always reward good writing.

Sample Writing Tasks and Responses

The following pages present sample 25-minute writing tasks and student responses from the NAEP 1998 writing assessment. The responses shown are examples of performance within each achievement level range: *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*.

These nine responses (three each at grades 4, 8, and 12, respectively) were chosen by those who set achievement levels for the assessment. This group included teachers, other education specialists, and members of the general public.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Grade 4 Sample Tasks and Responses

Basic

Fourth-Grade Task: *Favorite Object*

We all have favorite objects that we care about and would not want to give up.

Think of one object that is important or valuable to you. For example, it could be a book, a piece of clothing, a game, or any object you care about.

Write about your favorite object. Be sure to describe the object and explain why it is valuable or important to you.

The student's response shown for *Favorite Object*, an informative task, is an example of the *Basic* achievement level for fourth grade. The response is somewhat organized and provides some details about the student's pet "Max" the "black rockwalker." The student describes, for example, the difference between Max's behavior with people he knows and those he doesn't, as well as Max's response when someone he knows comes home. Although meaning is generally clear in this response, it often lacks punctuation and has some grammatical lapses that force the reader to fill in gaps to fully understand it.

Proficient

Fourth-Grade Task: *Castle*

One morning a child looks out the window and discovers that a huge castle has appeared overnight. The child rushes outside to the castle and hears strange sounds coming from it. Someone is living in the castle!

The castle door creaks open. The child goes in.

Write a story about who the child meets and what happens inside the castle.

This student's response to *Castle*, a narrative task, is an example of the *Proficient* level of achievement in writing at grade 4. The response is clear and organized, with some illustrative details, such as the colors of the castle, that support the plot. The response also shows good plot development by building suspense as the boy enters the castle, goes upstairs, and finds the room with the "ugly monster" and "pretty princess." Most of the response is punctuated and capitalized correctly, with few grammatical errors. Because students had limited time to respond to tasks in the assessment, this story was not penalized for its abrupt ending.

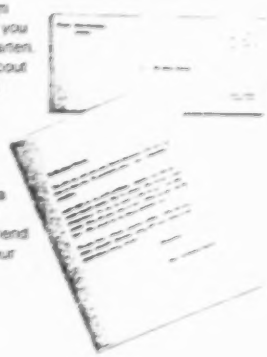
Advanced

Fourth-Grade Task: *Invisible Friend*

Open the envelope labeled **K** and take out the letter.

Pretend this letter is from an imaginary friend that you have had since kindergarten. Read the letter. Think about what you could say that would help your friend decide to become visible.

On the lined pages in your test booklet, write a letter to your imaginary friend. Convince your friend to become visible. In your letter, use details and examples.

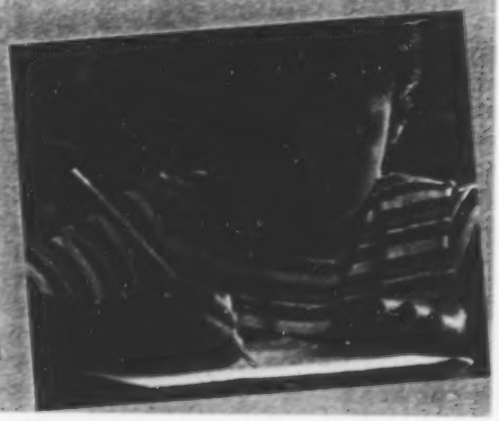


This response to the persuasive task *Invisible Friend* is an example of the *Advanced* level of fourth-grade writing achievement. It contains numerous developed reasons why the imaginary friend should become visible. It also has strong audience awareness, conveying clearly persuasive suggestions to the invisible friend: "If you are nice enough, which I know you are, you could also make some nice, new, friends." The response is well structured with a strong ending, varied sentence structures, and effective vocabulary.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 Writing Assessment.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

My favorite object is my dog, my dog name is mac he is black rottweiler, he is playfull of your know him if you don't is not go away back, yeah, run you ass, he will bite you, and he will take on your shirt. Mac will run with you are coming home he will scratch the door you opening it, as soon as you open come running out jump all over you and he would play with you. That's my story my most valuable object mac.



One day it was very late, work up and found himself, with a purple pink and like green and yellow rainbow he looked at the window. He open door and went to see what was in the room. He walked in the door and he did nobody covered. So he looked again still no answer.

When the boy went inside the room pretty much inside out like the outside of the color. He looked around and saw that there must be someone living here. The room there he could see that it was clean in the room.

He went up stairs in a room and found it and there he saw the ugly monster and behind there was a pretty princess. He was in love. The princess turn side up.

Dear Invisible Friend

Thank you for writing to me in my imagination. I wanted to say Happy Birthday and also to give some advice to turning visible. Here comes the advice. OK, my mom and dad could adopt you and take care of you just like a real child. We could have lots of fun together and maybe we could even share a room. We also could still be friends and a sister to me and my family. You and I could go to the same school and maybe even the same class. If your nice enough, which I know you are. You could make some nice, new friends. We also have a lot of kids in the neighborhood, so you could also make a lot of nice, new, friends in the neighborhood. If you do come visible you would love my room so much. If you like flowers I have green walls and flowers border walls. It is so pretty! One reason I want you to become visible is because you prolly are so beautiful with blue eyes and blond hair. Another reason to become visible because in all of the family's, espically mine, they love you and kiss you and hug you to death. Something that is great about being visible is that all kids I know are so nice. I want you to become visible. Please do!

Sincerely,
Your best friend

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Grade 8 Sample Tasks and Responses

Basic

Eighth-Grade Task: *Space Visitor*

Imagine this situation!

A noise outside awakens you one night. You look out the window and see a spaceship. The door of the spaceship opens, and out walks a space creature. What does the creature look like? What does the creature do? What do you do?

Write a story about what happens next.

This student's response to the narrative task *Space Visitor* is an example of the *Basic* level of writing achievement at grade 8. It tells an organized story, with good plot development and some precise details, such as the writer's approach to and description of the alien. The piece does not present particularly varied sentence structures and lacks some sentence boundaries, but the writer's meaning is clear across the response.

Proficient

Eighth-Grade Task: *Designing a TV Show*

A public television network is seeking ideas for a new series of shows that would be educational for teenagers. The series will include ten one-hour episodes and will be shown once a week. Some of the titles under consideration are:

"Great Cities of the World"

"Women in History"

"Nature Walks"

"American Legends"

Choose one of these titles. Write a letter to the network president describing your ideas for a new educational series. In your letter, describe what one episode might be like. Use specific examples of what information you would include in the episode so the network president will be able to imagine what the series would be like.

The *Proficient* level of eighth-grade writing achievement is represented by this response to *Designing a TV Show*, an informative task. Though not particularly long, the response is well organized and clear. It has a strong beginning and ending, and contains relevant details that convey information about the writer's idea for a television show. Sentence structure in the response is varied, with some good examples of complex sentences and few language errors.

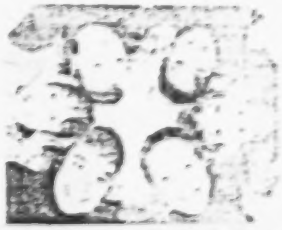
Advanced

Eighth-Grade Task: *Lengthening the School Year*

Many people think that students are not learning enough in school. They want to shorten most school vacations and make students spend more of the year in school. Other people think that lengthening the school year and shortening vacations is a bad idea because students use their vacations to learn important things outside of school.

What is your opinion?

Write a letter to your school board either in favor of or against lengthening the school year. Give specific reasons to support your opinion that will convince the school board to agree with you.



The sample shown for *Lengthening the School Year*, a persuasive task, is an example of the *Advanced* achievement level for eighth grade. The writer presents a letter that consistently develops detailed reasons into a cohesive argument. The response is very well organized, with strong audience awareness that builds convincing persuasion for the student's position that the school year should not be lengthened. The sentence structure is varied and sophisticated, with effective word choice. The writer also uses strategies such as irony to refute the argument for lengthening the school year.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 Writing Assessment.

One night last Friday there was something strange going on. I just thought well, there must be a storm but I also hear strange noises, noises I've never heard before but I just went to sleep. About 2 hours later the noises were so loud I woke up it was the strangest noise you have ever hear. I got up and went down stairs I heard the noises outside so I opened the front door walked out side I heard it then in the back so I walked walked to the back one to my Surprise there was an Alien It was green and was about 3 feet tall so I was a little

Relax when I was 2 feet taller then it. It walked towards me & screamed and yelled Help! Help me! I screamed my dad like ~~of~~ Came down stairs and noticed the Alien bar was Startled to see it. He went up Stairs got his Super spay came back down and sprayed the 3 foot Alien with it he the fat it back on his Space Ship and It flew up. I never saw it again but I always wanted If I will ever see it again.

Dear mr. President,

1/12/89

I think you should have a show about "women in history." Alot of people want to know about women and what they've done to help our country. There have been many women heroes and they should be recognized. You could do the show like Wishbone except all the shows be about women in history instead of characters from a book. An idea for a show is Anne Frank. You could go to the place where these hid for so long and do the show right there. Everyone will get the chance to see how Anne lived. Alot of people haven't heard or seen her story. Well, it's time they do! So, please take into consideration my ideas and respond when you make your decision.

To Whom it may Concern,

I've heard about the debate of whether or not to lengthen the school year. I decided to voice my opinion. I believe that the school year should not be lengthened. Kids are stressed out enough with homework and school without adding more. Some might say that kids aren't learning enough, and since the future of the nation rests on their shoulders they need to go to school longer and learn more. I say those who are adults now went to school the same amount, if not shorter, of time that we do and they haven't completely ruined the country.

To make the country better you don't just need to know math, English, and history, you need to know social skills like getting along with others. You learn social skills at school but you can learn them just as easily while on vacation. If you go to another country for vacation you learn to accept and respect other cultures.

This can help extinguish prejudices.

If you add more schoolwork and homework kids will get more stressed out. When you're stressed out you aren't as agreeable and sometimes just give up trying and don't care a difference in the world.

I once heard someone say that you are only a kid for a short time. When you're an adult you have enough stress and ~~responsibility~~ hardly any time for fun, so why put stress on kids and make them lose their time to fun. Why turn them into adults before their time?

I completely agree with the person who said this. Let kids have fun and not be stuck in a hot school listening to a lecture, or at home doing homework when they used to be swimming or hanging out with their friends.

Thank you for considering my letter.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Grade 12 Sample Tasks and Responses

Basic

Twelfth-Grade Task: *Writing Mentor*

Your school has a program in which a twelfth grader acts as a mentor for a tenth grader at the beginning of each school year. The mentor's job is to help the tenth grader have a successful experience at your school. The tenth grader you are working with is worried about being able to write well enough for high school classes.

Write a letter to your tenth grader explaining what kind of writing is expected in high school classes and what the student can do to be a successful writer in high school.

As you plan your response, think about your own writing experiences. How would you describe "good" writing? What advice about writing has been helpful to you? What writing techniques do you use?

The response shown for *Writing Mentor*, an informative task, is an example of the *Basic* level of twelfth-grade writing achievement. Although the response is relatively brief, it is clear and focused, providing a well-organized sequence of information with some details. The student does not use sophisticated sentence structures in the response, but does offer some sentence variety. The response contains few language errors.

Proficient

Twelfth-Grade Task: *Special Object*

Read the following excerpt from a poem by Walt Whitman.

> There was a child who went forth every day,
> And the first object he look'd upon,
> that object he became,
> And that object became part of him for
> the day or a certain part of the day,
> Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

Whitman's poem suggests that certain objects become important to us and remain important to us even if we no longer have them.

Write a story in which you tell about an object that remains important to the main character over a period of years. The main character could be you or someone you know.

In your story, describe the main character's first encounter with the object, why the object is so important to the character, and how, over the years, it remains a part of the character's life.

This sample, an example of *Proficient* performance at grade 12, was written in response to *Special Object*, a narrative topic. It contains detailed characterizations that effectively recreate the time when the main character and her husband meet and fall in love, then moves somewhat abruptly to her fond memories many years later of her now-deceased husband. In spite of this gap, the response is well organized and shows good command of stylistic elements and control of language.

Advanced

Twelfth-Grade Task: *One Vote*

Your school is sponsoring a voter registration drive for 18-year-old high school students. You and three of your friends are talking about the project. Your friends say the following.

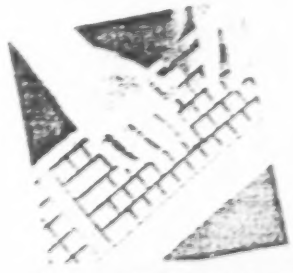
Friend 1: "I'm working on the young voters' registration drive. Are you going to come to it and register? You're all 18, so you can do it. We're trying to help increase the number of young people who vote and it shouldn't be too hard — I read that the percentage of 18- to 20-year-olds who vote increased in recent years. We want that percentage to keep going up."

Friend 2: "I'll be there. People should vote as soon as they turn 18. It's one of the responsibilities of living in a democracy."

Friend 3: "I don't know if people should even bother to register. One vote in an election isn't going to change anything."

Do you agree with friend 2 or 3? Write a response to your friends in which you explain whether you will or will not register to vote. Be sure to explain why and support your position with examples from your reading or experience. Try to convince the friend with whom you disagree that your position is the right one.

The sample response to the persuasive task *One Vote* is an example of the *Advanced* achievement level for twelfth-grade writing. It is a mature, well-reasoned argument for voting, which consistently supports points with well-developed details and persuasive examples. The writer's command of language is demonstrated by sophisticated, effective word choices throughout the response, as well as organization and sentence variety that consistently moves the argument forward.



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 Writing Assessment.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Dear Soonmore;

Through out your high school experience you will be asked to write many reports and essays. Most of them will be about things you've never heard of, that's when you head for the encyclopedia. -I am going to give you a few tips that ve picked up from various teachers. First of all, make sure you plan your paper properly. -If you just start writing you may run out of ideas really fast. Another thing, you might want to remember is if you are writing a formal paper or report, do not use contractions. It will be counted off. I learned the hard way. Remember to indent when starting paragraphs and use proper punctuation. If you have any questions feel free to ask me.

Sincerely,
Senior

I was 18 years old when I first saw him. I was a young immigrant in an unknown world; everything seemed so vast and incomprehensible.

I began working in a nearby factory for what seemed to be a phenomenal wage. I was young and frail and had the world at my fingertips. I carefully entered into my new employment equipped with a tenderness. Then I laid my eyes upon the most handsome young man I've ever set. Sensing my attraction, he smiled and winked at me. I nearly fell to the ground.

Later that day, we had lunch together. It turns out we were both new Italian immigrants - the only difference - I was from Sicily and he was from Venice. Needless to say we were off to a wonderful start.

Time has passed now, but I still recall September 15th of that year. It was a dreary misty day and I trudged into work 10 minutes late. It was Mich's birthday and I was in a horrible mood. Nothing was going right until I got to work. By the end of the day I was wearing a delicate gold ring on my finger.

Michael is now deceased. I remember his charming smile, his witty sense of humor, and his dark brown eyes. Death, which will be brought - the good and bad, beyond doubt will one day, can not bring him back. Even the far wonderful children can't bring him back. As I gaze at my wedding ring on my hand still wearing that same gold ring from so many years ago I smile because I know I don't want to bring him back... I never really lost him.

Whether a single person's vote makes a difference in an election is irrelevant. A democratic nation is one that recognizes an individual right to think and formulate an opinion, and voting is a manifestation of that right.

Mankind, the acknowledged ruler of the Earth, has been advantage over the other life-forms he shares existence with. As pointed out in the play Inherit the Wind, the bees is smarter, the mosquito more prolific, even a simple sponge is more durable. What separates mankind from other species is his complex brain-power: his ability to think.

The founding fathers of America recognized one fatal flaw of other nations - foolish monarchs who claimed absolute authority over their subjects. Dictatorial societies have the same root cause of their downfall - the attempts of squelching out personal opinion.

Voting celebrates the freedom the nation received on July 4, 1776. Voting is not a duty or a chore, it is a priveledge that we as humans have as our only advantage. We have the right and fortunately because of democratic society, the freedom to think.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NAEP Writing Assessment Results for the Nation

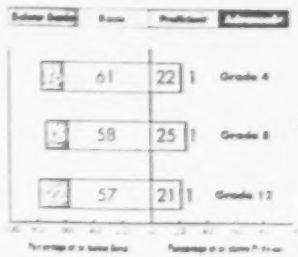
Percentage of Students at or Above the Writing Achievement Levels

	Below Basic	At or above Basic	At or above Proficient	Advanced
Nation				
Grade 4	16	84	23	1
Grade 8	16	84	27	1
Grade 12	22	78	22	1

As shown on the left, 23 percent of fourth graders, 27 percent of eighth graders, and 22 percent of twelfth graders were at or above *Proficient*—the level identified by the National Assessment Governing Board as the standard all students should reach.

While the table on the left shows the cumulative percentages of students "at or above" each achievement level, the figure on the right shows the percentage of students who fell below the *Basic* achievement level and those within the *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* levels. The figure makes it clear that over half of the students at each grade were within the *Basic* level of writing performance.

Percentages of Students Within Each Achievement Level Range



Writing Performance by Gender

The NAEP writing scores at each grade (4, 8, and 12) range from 0-300, with a national average of 150. These scores can be used to compare various subgroups of students.

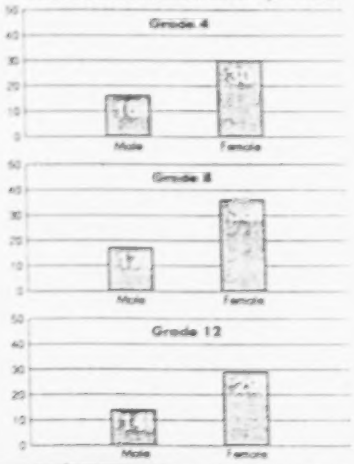
At all three grades females had higher average scores than males.

Average Writing Scores by Gender

	Male	Female
Grade 4	142	158
Grade 8	140	160
Grade 12	140	159

At each grade, a higher percentage of female students were at or above *Proficient* than male students. Across the three grades, between 29 and 36 percent of female students were at or above *Proficient*. In comparison, between 14 and 17 percent of male students were at or above this level.

Percentage of Students at or Above the *Proficient* Achievement Level by Gender



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 Writing Assessment.

Writing Performance by Race/Ethnicity

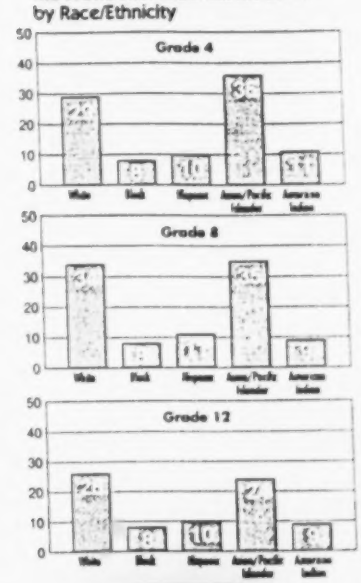
At grade 4, Asian/Pacific Islander students had higher scores than White students, who, in turn, had higher scores than Black, Hispanic, and American Indian students. American Indian students also scored higher than Black students at grade 4. At grades 8 and 12, Asian/Pacific Islander students and White students had higher scores than Black, Hispanic, and American Indian students.

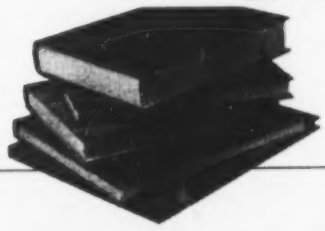
Average Writing Scores by Race/Ethnicity

Grade 4	
White	157
Black	131
Hispanic	134
Asian/Pacific Islander	164
American Indian	138
Grade 8	
White	158
Black	131
Hispanic	131
Asian/Pacific Islander	159
American Indian	132
Grade 12	
White	156
Black	134
Hispanic	135
Asian/Pacific Islander	152
American Indian	129

Across the three grades, the percentages of students who reached or exceeded the *Proficient* achievement level was 26 to 34 percent among White students, 8 percent among Black students, 10 to 11 percent among Hispanic students, 24 to 36 percent among Asian/Pacific Islander students, and 9 to 11 percent among American Indian students.

Percentage of Students at or Above the *Proficient* Achievement Level by Race/Ethnicity





Writing Performance by Type of School

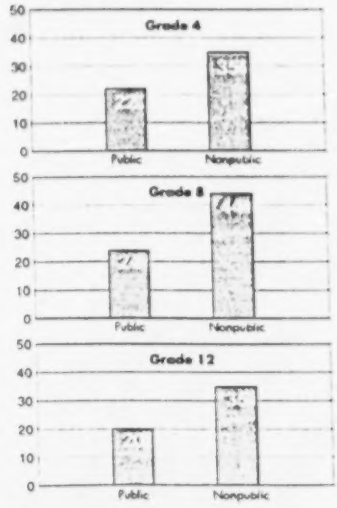
At all three grades, students attending nonpublic schools had higher scores than students attending public schools. Differences between the performance of students in public and nonpublic schools may be due to factors such as admission standards and the likelihood of greater parental involvement at nonpublic schools.

Average Writing Scores by Type of School

Grade 4	
Public	148
Nonpublic	164
Grade 8	
Public	148
Nonpublic	167
Grade 12	
Public	148
Nonpublic	165

At each grade, a higher percentage of nonpublic school students reached or exceeded this level than did public school students. Across the three grades, between 35 and 44 percent of nonpublic school students were at or above the *Proficient* level of performance. In comparison, between 20 and 24 percent of public school students reached or exceeded this level.

Percentage of Students at or Above the *Proficient* Achievement Level by Type of School



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 Writing Assessment.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

School and Home Factors Related to Writing Achievement

What classroom activities are related to students' writing performance? Are there aspects of students' home environments that seem to encourage and support writing achievement? NAEP collects information that may help researchers, educators, and parents answer these questions. For example, it may help educators discover that their activities to support writing are shared by their colleagues across the nation. It can suggest approaches to help students become better writers, and it can provide a resource for parents seeking to support their children's success in writing.

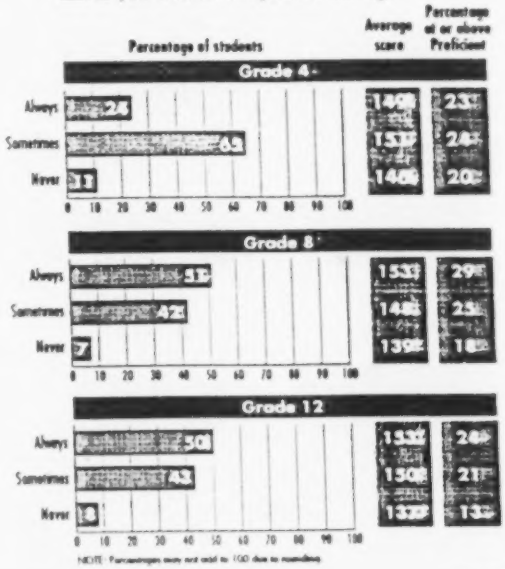
The data shown in the following figures are for students attending both public and nonpublic schools. While it is possible to study the relationship between students' writing performance and various home and school practices, it cannot be established that these practices cause a higher level of achievement in writing. The relationship that exists between writing achievement and another factor may, in fact, be caused by a complex interaction of numerous factors.

Talking About Writing

Students who participated in the NAEP 1998 writing assessment were asked how often they talked with their teachers about their writing while they were working on a writing assignment.

At all three grades, most students said that they spoke with their teachers about what they were writing while engaged in a writing activity. Those students who said that their teachers "always" or "sometimes" spoke with them about their writing did better than the students who said that their teachers "never" did so. Furthermore, at grades 8 and 12, students who said that their teachers "always" talked with them about their writing while they were working on it had higher scores than those who reported that their teachers "sometimes" did so.

When you write, how often does your teacher talk to you about what you are writing?

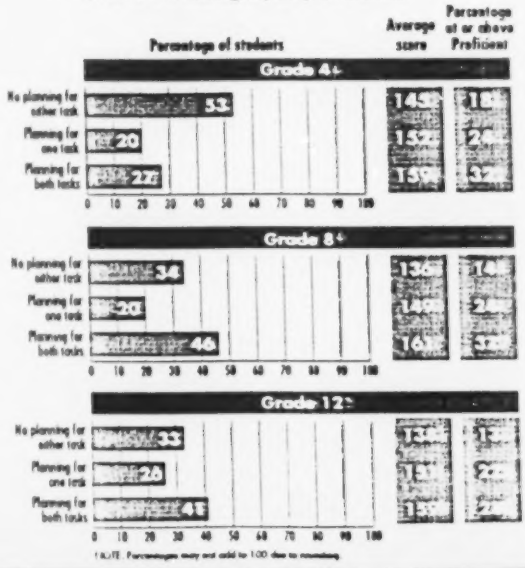


Planning to Write

Research on the writing process suggests that students who have the opportunity to think about what they want to say and how best to express it in writing are more engaged with the writing task, and therefore are more likely to express their ideas clearly. Each student participating in the NAEP 1998 writing assessment was given a brochure that discussed how to plan for and revise writing. Students were also given space in their test booklets for planning their writing.

Forty-seven percent of fourth graders, 66 percent of eighth graders, and 67 percent of twelfth graders planned for their response to at least one of the two tasks in the test booklet. At all three grades, students who planned their responses to both tasks had higher average scores than those who did not plan for either task or for only one topic.

Number of occurrences of planning in test booklet based on 2 writing topics per student



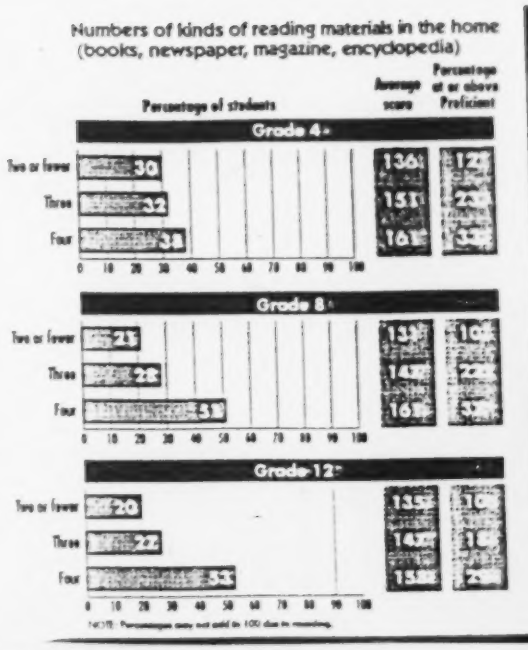
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 Writing Assessment.

Reading Materials in the Home

Young people who have a variety of reading materials in the home can learn to appreciate different kinds of reading experiences and writing styles. Furthermore, exposure to many different kinds of writing may support students' development as versatile writers. In the 1998 writing assessment, students were asked about the number and types of reading materials they had at home.

At all three grades, between 38 and 53 percent of students said they had "four" different kinds of reading materials (books, magazine, newspaper, and an encyclopedia) at home. At all three grades, the students who said they had "four" kinds of reading materials at home had higher scores than those who said they had "three" or "two or fewer."

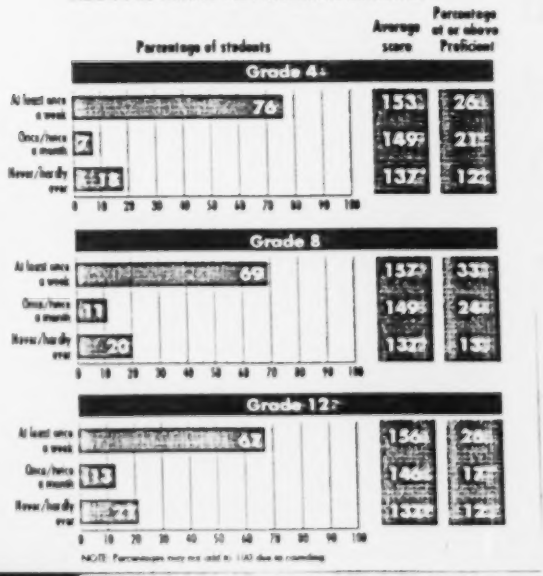


Discussing Studies at Home

Students need opportunities to discuss their schoolwork with caring family members at home. Research has documented the higher achievement of children whose families take an active role in their learning. Recognizing this, education reforms such as *Goals 2000* have sought to strengthen the relationship between parents and schools.

In the 1998 writing assessment, students were asked how often they discuss their studies with someone at home.

At all three grades, most students said they discuss their studies with someone at home "at least once a week." These students had higher scores than those who said they discussed their studies at home less frequently.



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 Writing Assessment.

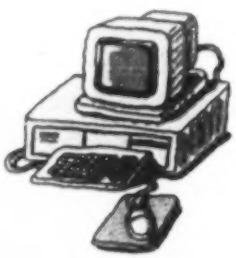
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Writing Performance Within States

While the average scale scores of students across the nation provide parents and educators with a broad view of how well American students are performing in writing, it is also informative to examine the writing performance of students in individual states. In 1998, in addition to the national assessment, NAEP examined the writing performance of representative samples of eighth-grade students in states and other jurisdictions that volunteered to participate in a state-level assessment.

Eighth-grade public school students in 35 states and 4 other jurisdictions participated in the NAEP state-level assessment. The average scale score for the nation, shown in the first row of this table, represents the performance of public school students only.

In 1998, the national average writing score was 148, and scores for students participating in the state-level assessment ranged from 124 to 165. Differences in writing performance among states and jurisdictions are most likely related to a combination of factors, including the effectiveness of an individual state's or jurisdiction's programs, economic constraints, and student demographic characteristics.

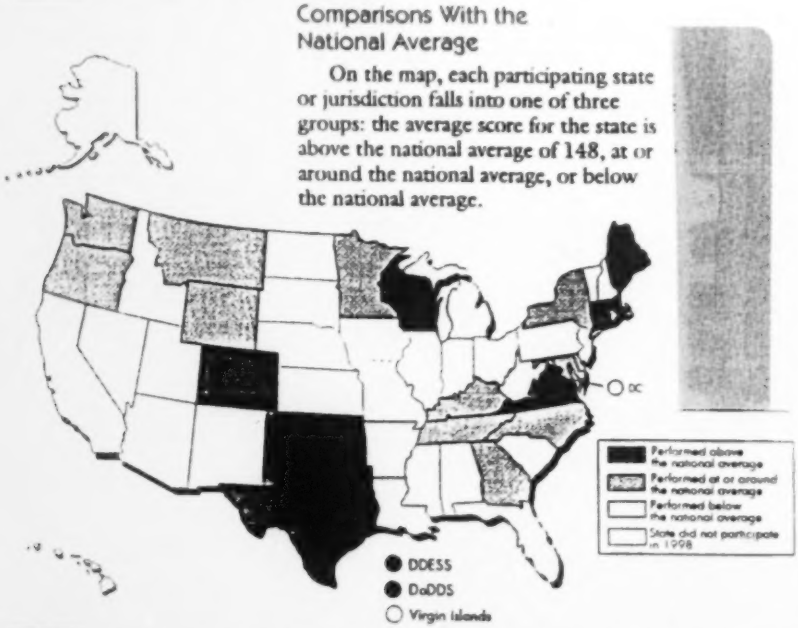


	Average scale scores
Nation	148
States	
Alabama	144
Arizona	143
Arkansas	137
California†	141
Colorado	151
Connecticut	165
Delaware	144
Florida	142
Georgia	146
Hawaii	135
Kentucky	146
Louisiana	136
Maine	155
Maryland	147
Massachusetts	155
Minnesota†	148
Mississippi	134
Missouri	142
Montana†	150
Nevada	140
New Mexico	141
New York†	146
North Carolina	150
Oklahoma	152
Oregon	149
Rhode Island	148
South Carolina	140
Tennessee	148
Texas	154
Utah	143
Virginia	153
Washington	148
West Virginia	144
Wisconsin†	153
Wyoming	146
Other Jurisdictions	
District of Columbia	126
DDESS	160
DoDDS	156
Virgin Islands	124

† Indicates jurisdiction did not meet one or more of the guidelines for school participation.

Comparisons With the National Average

On the map, each participating state or jurisdiction falls into one of three groups: the average score for the state is above the national average of 148, at or around the national average, or below the national average.



DDESS: Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools. DoDDS: Department of Defense Dependents Schools (Overseas).
NOTE: National results are based on the national assessment sample, not on aggregated state assessment samples. Differences between states and jurisdictions may be partially explained by other factors not included in the table or figure.
SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 Writing Assessment.

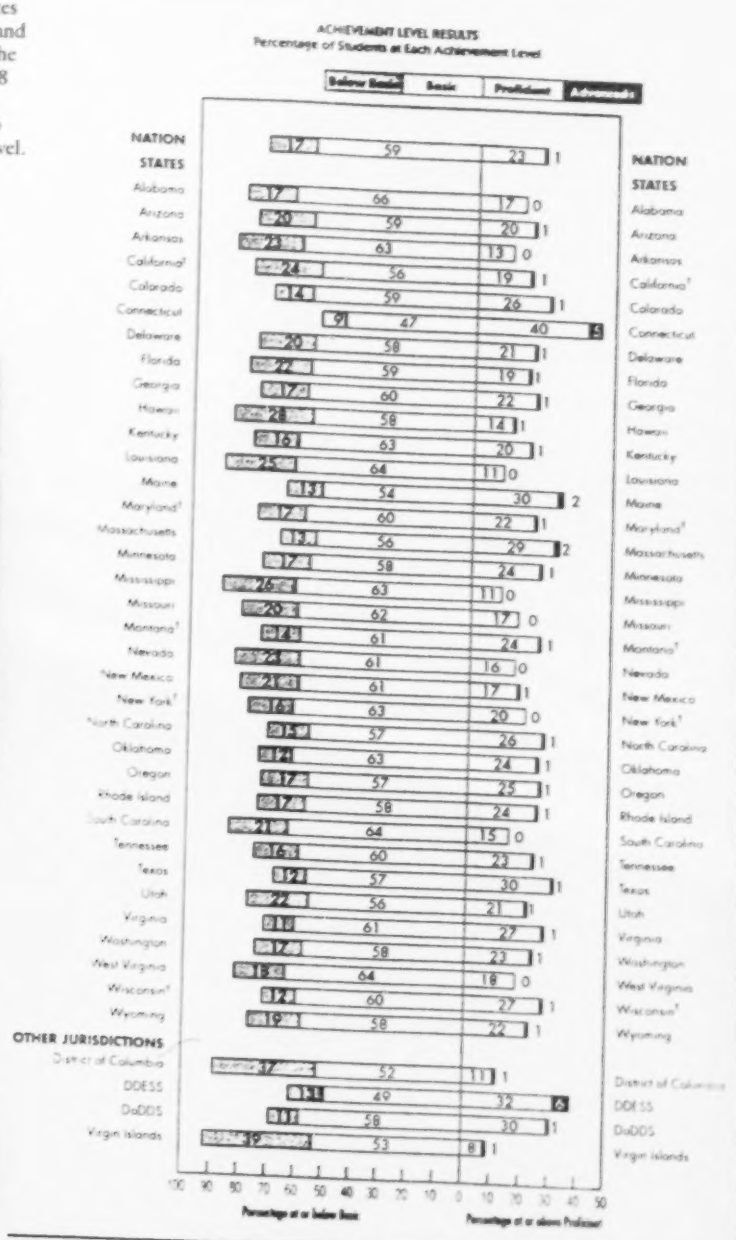
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Achievement Level Results for the States

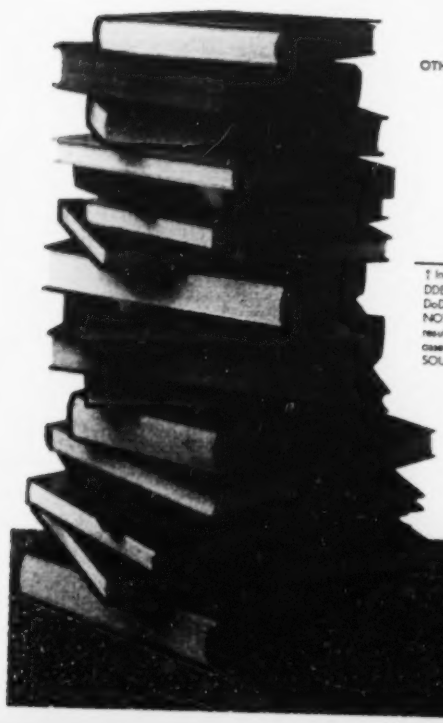
In 1998, across the participating states and other jurisdictions, between 47 and 66 percent of students were within the *Basic* level of performance, between 8 and 40 percent were within the *Proficient* level, and between 0 and 6 percent were within the *Advanced* level.

Furthermore, across the participating states and other jurisdictions, between 61 and 91 percent of students were at or above the *Basic* level of performance, and between 9 and 44 percent were at or above the *Proficient* level.

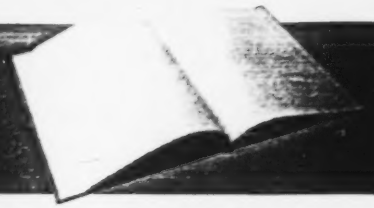
Percentage of Grade 8 Students Within Each Achievement Level Range for Public Schools Only: 1998



† Indicates jurisdiction did not meet one or more of the guidelines for school participation.
DDESS: Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools
DoDDS: Department of Defense Dependents Schools (Overseas)
NOTE: Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding. In addition, summing the percentages between two or more categories may not result in the exact cumulative percentage due to rounding. National results are based on the national sample, not an aggregated state assessment samples. Differences between states and jurisdictions may be partially explained by other factors not included in this table.
SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 Writing Assessment.



BEST COPY AVAILABLE



NAEP 1998

WRITING

Report Card Highlights

Other Publications and Related Materials

For additional information and a full report on the NAEP 1998 writing assessment, read the ***NAEP 1998 Writing Report Card for the Nation and the States***. Additional reports are available from the 1998 and past NAEP writing assessments. Please consult the information on the right for ordering these and other resources about the assessment.

Writing Framework and Specifications for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress, National Assessment Governing Board (http://www.nagb.org)

NAEP 1998 Writing State Report Card (request specific state)

NAEP 1996 Trends in Academic Progress

NAEP 1996 Trends in Writing: Fluency and Writing Conventions

Windows Into the Classroom: NAEP's 1992 Writing Portfolio Study

For information on ordering these and other NAEP publications, write:

U.S. Department of Education ED Pubs,
P.O. Box 1398
Jessup, MD 20794-1398
or call toll-free 1-877-4 ED PUBS

VISIT NAEP ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB!

The Nation's Report Card Online offers a wealth of information including:

- **Online Publications and Online Ordering**
- **Information for Teachers and School Administrators**
- **Information by Subject Area**
- **Sample Questions**
- **Information on NAEP Participation**

http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

United States Department of Education
National Center for Education Statistics
Washington, D.C. 20208-5653

Official Business Only
Penalty for Private Use, $300

Postage and Fees Paid
U.S. Department of Education
Permit No. G-17

STANDARD MAIL (A)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE